

Old Road to Bloomfield
Newark, New Jersey 07104
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To the Editor
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The confrontation between the Passaic Valley Sewer Commission and the joint forces of the citizens of the East Ward and City officials was not only needless, but bordered on the ludicrous.

The Passaic Valley Sewer Commission certainly knew that its proposed sludge incinerator would meet violent opposition, if for no other reason than "Not in my back yard." But the Commission should have anticipated this emotional response and presented some data to refute charges of poisonous stack emission and hazardous ash. The Commission might have dried a quantity of this sludge, burned it under laboratory conditions and analyzed the stack emission and ash residue. These data would not have quelled the opposition, but presentation of them would have indicated the Commission's concern for the environmental impact of its proposal. The Commission deserves all the charges of insensitivity leveled against it.

The opposition, faced with this insensitivity, refused to recognize the existence of a problem that ultimately has to be solved, reacted emotionally and said "no". This reaction is understandable. Consequently the public hearing proved to be an exercise in futility. The blame for this result rests squarely on the Passaic Valley Sewer Commission.

However, there may be an acceptable alternative to incineration that has been overlooked. Many years ago, the City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, decided to stop dumping its sewage into Lake Michigan. The sludge, dried and pulverized, is sold and used nationwide as a fertilizer for lawns and shrubs. It is not to be used on vegetable gardens.

The city fathers and protesting citizens might do well to look into this. A fertilizer factory doesn't produce poisonous stack emissions or hazardous ash and might cost less than an incinerator.

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